

REMARKS:

In accordance with the foregoing, claims 1, 7, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, 26, 28, and 29 have been amended for clarification, and new claim 30 has been added. No new matter has been added. Thus, claims 1-30 are pending and under consideration. The Examiner's rejections are traversed below.

An interview was held on March 9, 2004 at which the invention and the prior art were discussed.

As discussed with the Examiner, U.S. Patent No. 5,893,098 ('098) is directed to an automated communications system for linking a survey questionnaire to fixed reply data based on the input survey questionnaire. The '098 method prepares survey questions and receives associated response documents by allowing the author of the survey questions to predetermine possible response documents (see, column 5, lines 38-42, column 13, lines 63-67; column 15 lines 2-4 of '098) to each survey question. This means that the respondent user is limited to choosing from the predetermined responsive documents paired with a survey question, and the survey author is required to predetermine responsive documents based on each specific survey question prior to transmitting the survey question to the respondent user.

The present invention stores "a set of fixed form replies" having reply contents "independent of the content of the electronic message" (see, claims 1, 7, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of the present invention). The author of a message does not have the burden of predetermining responses for each specific message, instead the recipient of a message selects any reply from the "set of fixed form replies" as a reply choice and replies to the message without being confined to the reply choices selected by the sender of the message. For example, as shown in FIG. 5 of the present invention, for the message, "today is fine, isn't it!" the recipient is free to choose any reply from the set of fixed form replies, including facial expressions ☺ and ☹ in FIG. 5. Thus, the set of fixed form replies can be flexibly used "with other electronic messages" as replies to other messages (see, claims 1, 7, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, 26, 28, and 29 of the present invention).

Accordingly, based on the distinguishing features discussed with the Examiner, claims 1, 7, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, 26, 28, and 29 have been amended to emphasize the same.

The Examiner also rejected claims 1-4, 6-22 and 24-25 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over '098 and U.S. Patent No. 5,894,506 ('506), and rejected claims 5 and 23

under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over '098 and '506 in further view of U.S. Patent No.5,982,891('891).

At least for the same reasons discussed above, dependent claims 2-6, 8, 10-12, 14-16, 18-20, 22-24, and 27 are distinguishable over '098. The '098 does not teach or suggest storing "a set of fixed form replies... having reply contents independent of the content of the electronic message" to allow use of the set of fixed form replies with other messages, thus the combination of '506 and/or '891 would not lead to the features recited in the present invention.

The dependent claims also recite additional features not taught or suggested by the cited references. For example, claims 2 and 10 recite "totaling a number of the selections of each of fixed form replies as the reply to the message" for determining the fixed form replies used to allow the sender of the message to easily refer to the fixed form replies mostly used. This is not taught or suggested by the cited references. It is submitted that the dependent claims are independently patentable over the prior art.

It is respectfully submitted that the present invention patentably distinguishes over the prior art, and withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

NEW CLAIM:

New claim 30 has been added to clarify that the system of the present invention allows the use of "a set of fixed form replies" that are independent of the electronic message content. This eliminates the need for predetermining a response for each message, which is required by the '098 method. As recited in new claim 30, a response is selected from "the stored data for the set of fixed form replies" for a new electronic message without the extra operation of assigning a response to the new message as is required according to the '098 method.

CONCLUSION:

In accordance with the foregoing, claims 1, 7, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, 26, 28, and 29 have been amended, claim 30 has been added, and thus, claims 1-30 are pending and under consideration.

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

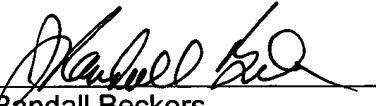
Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

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